

# HALF CRAZY, HALF SANE

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When a local logger was asked on a recent survey what skills were needed in an ideal timber products employee, he responded, "I'm looking for someone who is half crazy and half sane." It may seem like an odd answer, but if you make your living in the woods of the Upper Peninsula, perhaps the response underlines a looming reality of the condition of the timber industry.

The timber products business, which has never been an undemanding lively hood, has many weighty challenges before it. With the increase in environmental concerns, strict regulations curbing the usage of public lands, a mounting sophistication in technology driven equipment, and no clear training program for future timber producers on how to use that technology, the view that lies ahead is unsettled at best. If those challenges were not enough to overcome, throw in a generally negative public perception, and the timber trade is challenged like never before.

There are; however, seeds of solutions being planted as well. The Timber Products Regional Skills Alliance has convened a group of professionals willing to strategize and act on the priority concerns. Participants' experience of this RSA range from how to grow trees, to

how to produce wood based products, and all the many steps in between. State Representatives and representatives from the Governor's office have been in attendance as well. "We're determining what the main focus of the RSA will be and how we can achieve maximum impact on some of these issues", states Dayna Keranen, RSA Administrator. "So far we've been able to create a data base of timber products businesses, make some preliminary surveys within the industry and identify some regional educational opportunities for those interested in careers in the timber products industry."

You may learn more about the Timber Products RSA and their future plans by visiting their newly established website at [www.timbersa.org](http://www.timbersa.org).

